

Dear new puppy mums and dads,

During our Puppy Class seminar we speak about the importance of early Socialisation, but at the same time you have been told by

your vets that you have to wait before taking your pups out until their final vaccination is complete. Please take the time to read OUR opinion on this topic, backed up by research at the end from the *THE VACCINATION GUIDELINES GROUP (VGG)*

OF THE WORLD SMALL ANIMAL VETERINARY ASSOCIATION (WSAVA) published in Jan 2016 .



A lot of books about puppies still recommend waiting for the last vaccination before taking your puppies out, but dog behaviourists around the world are concerned about the emphasis that is being put on not taking the pups out. At KURI we keep up to date with the very latest research and as such we are confident to say you should take your pups out as early as possible. Doing so increases your pups chance of being a well rounded confident and properly socialised adult.

The first socialisation period has ended by the time you get your puppies, ideally you would get them between the 6 to 8 week point. (*Phaffenburger 1958 and vaccination books from Vets, say the same*). The second one ends at about 12-16 weeks of age. What your puppy learns in those first few weeks of life is more than it will learn in a whole lifetime.

Too many dogs become reactive, are registered as dangerous or menacing dogs or even put down. A great way to prevent reactivity in most dogs is to socialise them properly as puppies. That does not mean they have to meet every dog in every dog park, it means they need to SAFELY experience all the things they may encounter as an adult, so noises, floor surfaces, people, rain, wind, leaves, you name it, the list is endless. Numerous dog bites are caused by fear. A confident dog is a lot less likely to bite. And please don't be fooled by the fact that your puppy loves everyone and isn't worried about their environment at this stage.

We will explain the 3 fear stages your puppies go through in their development.

The first fear stage is anywhere from 8 to 12 weeks, the second one around 4 to 6 months and the third anywhere from 9 to 12 months. Nature has built in those fear stages to make sure the little ones are not taking any risks before they're physically capable, therefore they stay out of trouble. That was a good strategy for their ancestors, the wolves, to be cautious of strange objects, people, other animals and dangerous situations to stay alive. But it is obviously not a good way to see the world for a domesticated

dog that lives in our human society.

A poorly socialised puppy will love his family and close friends and usually be confident in their own backyard or the friend's place they are used to, but they would see the rest of the world as a potential threat. The more different environments your puppy explores, the more different people your puppy meets in the first few weeks of their life the less likely they are to be fearful. Make your puppy fit in your lifestyle and our busy human world, take them to busy places with trains, buses, let them discover rain and wind, let them meet people in wheelchairs, old people, children of different ages, people of different ethnicities or with hats or sunglasses, really large men, etc. It must be emphasised that all those experiences are positive, we cannot force our puppies into situations they are not comfortable with. Use reward based training to desensitise and slowly bring the puppy into new situations to avoid bad experiences and their long-term effects. Especially if you have noticed they are in a fear stage!

Now what about those vaccinations? The risk of poor socialisation outweighs the risks of disease in our opinion and others based on research below. Puppies may catch diseases either from direct contact with other dogs, or through contact with their urine or faeces. So, bring them out where contamination from unvaccinated dogs is unlikely in order to minimise the risk to your puppy. Avoid popular outdoor dog walking areas where there may be a lot of dog faeces, especially in higher risk areas where there might be more unvaccinated adult dogs running free. Do keep in mind though that most dogs in NZ are vaccinated and you are therefore benefitting from the term "herd immunity".

We cannot guarantee you anywhere (not even in your own backyard) that your puppy won't get sick from touching the faeces of a wild animal (i.e birds). We do think it is important to keep this in perspective though. The risks are very low and need to be balanced against the risks of keeping your puppy isolated indoors until their vaccinations are complete. We believe being outside is an important part of early learning and we wouldn't want your puppies to miss out on this.

If you are not sure that it is okay for you to place your puppy on the ground out and about, then it is important that you carry your puppy out and about as often as you can, and in different types of weather. Maybe you have access to private land or feel okay bringing your puppy to the beach and let it play in low tide along the water line.

Only you can decide whether or not you want to take this small risk of taking your puppy out before your vet's recommendation and whether or not the risks of reactivity may outweigh your concerns over the risks of disease.

So why do KURI say the risks are low and your vet may say something different?

Based on the article mentioned at the start we now know the following:

*many vaccine data-sheets continue to recommend an initial course of two injections of core vaccine. Some products are also licensed with a '10 week finish' designed such that the second of two core vaccinations is given at 10 weeks of age. The rationale behind this protocol is to permit 'early socialisation' of puppies while diminishing the risk of infectious diseases. **The VGG recognises that early socialisation is essential to the behavioural development of dogs (Korbelik et al. 2011, AVSAB 2008) [EB1].** Where such protocols (i.e. 'puppy classes') are adopted, vigilance should still be maintained by the owner – allowing restricted exposure of their puppy to controlled areas and only to other puppies and adults that appear healthy and are fully vaccinated. In particular 'puppy classes' should be held in venues away from the veterinary practice.*

An integral part of core vaccination of puppies is the 'booster' vaccine that has traditionally been given either at 12 months of age or 12 months after the last of the primary series of puppy vaccines. The main aim of this vaccine is to ensure that a protective immune response develops in any dog that may have failed to respond to any of the vaccines in the primary core series, rather than necessarily 'boosting' the immune response. The delivery of this vaccine at 12 months of age is likely to have been chosen historically as a convenient time to request the owner to attend the practice for a first annual health check. This therefore implies that should an individual puppy fail to respond to any of the primary core vaccinations, that puppy may be unprotected until it receives this 12-month vaccine. This might account for occurrences of infectious disease (e.g. canine parvovirus I enteritis) in a proportion of vaccinated puppies at less than 12 months of age. The VGG has re-evaluated this practice and now suggests that veterinarians might wish to reduce this possible window of susceptibility by bringing forward this vaccine from 52 weeks to 26 weeks of age (or indeed at any time point between 26 and 52 weeks of age; however, 26 weeks of age provides a convenient timing). This practice will require that pet owners clearly understand why this is recommended, For core vaccines, after a 26 week 'booster', another core vaccine would not be required for at least another 3 years. This new recommendation for vaccination at 6 months of age as an alternative to vaccination at about 1 year of age is certainly not mutually exclusive to, and does not preclude, a 1-year or 16-month 'first annual health check'. Many veterinarians are understandably keen to check the animals under their care at around the time they reach skeletal maturity.

Revaccination of Adult Dogs

Dogs that have responded to vaccination with MLV core vaccines maintain a solid immunity (immunological memory) for many years in the absence of any repeat vaccination (Bohm et al. 2004, Mouzin et al. 2004, Schultz 2006, Mitchell et al. 2012) [EB1]. Following the 26 or 52 week booster, subsequent revaccinations are given at intervals of 3 years or longer. It should be emphasised that triennial adult revaccination does not generally apply to killed core vaccines (except for rabies) nor to the non-core vaccines, and particularly not to vaccines containing bacterial antigens. Thus Leptospira, Bordetella and Borrelia (Lyme disease) products, but also parainfluenza virus components, require more frequent boosters for reliable protection (Ellis & Krakowka 2012, Klaasen et al. 2014, Ellis 2015, Schuller et al. 2015) [EB1]. Therefore an adult dog may, according to these guidelines, still be revaccinated annually, but the components of these vaccinations may differ each year. Typically, core vaccines are currently administered triennially, with chosen non-core products being given annually. The VGG is aware that in some countries only multi-component products containing core and non-core combinations are available. The VGG would encourage manufacturers to make a full range of reduced-component vaccines (or at least separate core and non-core vaccines (Mitchell et al. 2012) available wherever possible. An adult dog that had received a complete course of core vaccinations as a puppy, including a 26 or 52 week booster, but that may not have been vaccinated regularly as

an adult, requires only a single dose of MLV core vaccine to boost immunity (Mouzin et al. 2004, Mitchell et al. 2012) [EB1]. Similarly, an adopted adult dog (or puppy over 16 weeks of age) of unknown vaccination history requires only a single dose of MLV core vaccine to engender a protective immune response. Many vaccine data sheets will advise in these circumstances that the dog requires two vaccinations (as for a puppy), but this practice is unjustified and contrary to fundamental immunological principles [EB4]. Note again, that this does not apply to non-core vaccines, many of which will require two doses in an adult dog.

Serological Testing to Monitor Immunity to Canine Vaccines

Since publication of the 2010 guidelines there have been advances in the availability of rapid and simple in-practice serological test kits that can detect the presence of protective antibody specific for CDV, CAV and CPV-2 in individual dogs. These test kits complement the traditional laboratory-based modalities (i.e. virus neutralisation and haemagglutination inhibition test) that remain the gold standards' for serological testing. Two commercially produced test kits are available and have been applied and validated in the practice and shelter setting (Gray et al. 2012, Litster et al. 2012) [EB1]. These test kits have proven popular with veterinarians who wish to be able to offer their clients an alternative to routine core revaccination at 3-yearly intervals, but the kits remain relatively expensive and unfortunately, at present, testing costs more than a dose of vaccine.

It is of course your choice, however we like to give you an informed choice at KURI.

No matter what we do life contains risks, KURI's view is the benefits outweigh the risks in this case. We can not say your puppy will not catch a disease, and we are not insisting you must take them out before they are fully vaccinated. However according to this most current research, will your pups then be staying home for 6 months to ensure they are fully vaccinated? Do we do that to human babies?

Whatever you do, have lots of fun with your new cutie ! :)